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In my collecting I appreciate the provenance of coins. Those coins in my collection that have a clear provenance are esteemed differently than other coins. Knowing some of the history of individual specimens increases their allure and market value. Today with the increasing political pressure on collectors, especially collectors of classical coins, it is not surprising that a clear known provenance is becoming even more desirable. While perusing the website Sixbid in January I found an announcement from the Swiss company Lugdunum GmbH that they provide a numismatic provenance research service through a focused website <https://www.ex-numis.com>. I am not touting their service just observing the coin market.

In this issue Paul Oostervink offers us a wonderful article on the gold medal of Isabella d'Este which resides in the KHM in Vienna. I've admired this medal for years, even mentioning it these pages, but am ever so appreciative of Paul's thoroughness in his presentation of the medal and for Robert Ronus' translation. The word *Gnadenmedaille* is foreign to me but is explained in the article. In addition to translation Robert has written an article on a contemporary forgery of a Habsburg coin and your editor writes on an elusive Spanish colonial coin type. We have a book review of Dale Seppa's *Ecuadorian Coins—An Annotated Checklist*. Rounding out the bulletin I've selected some short articles from auction houses; these articles cover mostly ancients but also medieval and modern. Hope you enjoy the bulletin and if you are able to please do view the electronic version on the NI website in order to appreciate full color images of the coins.

Herman

Vespasian Aureus: Paci Orbis Terrarum Augusti
Numismatica Ars Classica



The Roman Empire: Vespasian, AD 69–79, aureus, Ephesus AD 72–73, AV 7.29 g. IMP CAESAR VESPAS AVG COS III TR P P P Laureate head r.; below, annulet. Rev. PACI·ORB – TERR·AVG Diademed, draped and turreted bust of Pax r. C –, cf. 294 (COS III and PAX bust l.). BMC –, cf. p. 96, note (COS III and PAX bust l.). RIC –, CBN. Calicó 657 var. (COS III). An apparently unrecorded variety of an exceedingly rare type. An issue of great interest and fascination.

Ever since they inherited the Pergamene Kingdom in 133 BC the Romans had taken a high-level interest in the affairs of Asia Minor. Even the belligerence of the Pontic King Mithradates VI in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC did not deter them, despite the unspeakable atrocities he committed. One visible sign of Roman involvement was the issuance of coinage. In addition to the many thousands of provincial bronzes struck for the cities of Asia Minor, there were silver coinages—sometimes significant—from a few of the larger mints in the region. Some of these skirted the line between imperial and provincial, such as *cistophori* and the coins of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Other precious metal coins struck in the region were strictly imperial, including this Vespasian aureus from Ephesus. From AD 69 to the mid-70s, Ephesus produced a continual flow of denarii to meet regional needs. This may have been prompted by a dearth of the usual currency, *cistophori*, the most recent issues of which had been struck under Augustus and Claudius. Cistophorus production would not resume on any kind of scale until the reign of Titus, a decade after this aureus was struck, and the aurei and denarii of Ephesus no doubt were needed to fill the gap. Though struck on a significantly smaller scale than the main issues of Rome, Flavian denarii of Ephesus were produced in large quantities. The same cannot be said of Ephesian aurei, which are exceedingly rare. In their thorough update to the Flavian portion of RIC, Carradice and Buttrey could locate only four Flavian aurei of the Ephesus mint—two of Vespasian, and two of Titus. The present coin—being the gold component to the denarius RIC 1423—now counts as the fifth. The reverse, inscribed PACI ORB TERR AVG, celebrates the peace that Vespasian had brought to most of the Roman world by concluding the Roman civil war and the Jewish War. Carradice and Buttrey describe the turreted female head as a personification of the world, to which Vespasian had brought peace.

Reprinted with permission of Numismatica Ars Classica. Zurich, Auction 84 - Part I 20-21 May 2015, lot 943.

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A *Gnadenmedaille* of Isabella d'Este of Mantua (1474-1539)

Paul Oostervink, NI #2787

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Translated from the German by Robert Ronus, NI #LM139

Isabella was the oldest of the six children of Duke Ercole I d'Este (1431-1505)¹ and his first wife Eleonora of Aragon (1450-1493) and lived in Ferrara in Italy. Her parents were of the view that their sons and their two daughters should be brought up in the same way and Isabella received an unusual education for a woman in that time. At the age of 16 she spoke and translated Greek and Latin and appeared to have musical talents, singing, dancing and playing the lute.



**Ercole I d'Este
(1431-1505)**



**Eleonora d'Aragona
(1450-1493)**



**Isabella d'Este²
(1474-1539)**

Isabella was born into the noble dynasty of the House of Este. In 1490 she married Francesco Gonzaga II (1466-1519) of Mantua, whereby she obtained the title of "Marchesa" (*Marchioness*) of Mantua. Isabella established the Gonzaga court as the center of cultural life in Mantua.³



Francesco Gonzaga II of Mantua⁴ and Isabella d'Este⁵

Besides being an active collector of antique art, she was a Maecenas (an important patron of the arts) and was also very interested in astrology. She collected in that time for her “Grotta” (Palace) and her “Studiolo” (Study and Work Room). When in 1495 she visited her sister Beatrice, the wife of Ludovico Sforza, in Milan, she also met together with Gian Cristoforo Romano (1456-1512), who was an active sculptor and medallist but was also known as a connoisseur of antiques and a singer and generally as a courtier held in high regard.

The oldest known picture of Isabella is a medal with an imperial profile by Gian Cristoforo Romano which emphasized her dignity. The time of this medal has been established as 1495, when Romano obtained the commission from Isabella, and September 10, 1498, the date of a letter in which there is talk of a sonnet on this medal. This medal represents the only documented portrait of Isabella on a medal.

This medal is a so called **Gnadenmedaille**, literally “medal of favor”,—there does not seem to be an exact English term. Originally also called **Gnadenpfennige**, they were part of the development of badges of honor and orders in Europe. From the 16th century they spread out from predominantly South Germany. They were mostly bestowed by princes or other dignitaries, eventually even by members of the bourgeoisie. A more or less expensive quality would be chosen, depending on the rank of the receiver.



Isabella d'Este

Material: Bronze, cast, with olive brown patina
 Weight: 27.25 gram
 Diameter: 38.8 mm
 Thickness: 5.3 mm
 Designer: Gian Cristoforo Romano or *Giovanni Romano* (1456-1512)
 Source: British Museum, photos by permission of British Museum, London

On the obverse, the portrait in profile facing right, surrounded by the legend: **ISABELLA ESTEN[SIS] . MARCH[IONISSA] MAN[TVAE]**. (*Isabella d'Este Marchioness of Mantua*). On the reverse a standing winged female figure, carrying a thin staff in her right hand, under the left arm a hat (palm?) and at her feet a coiled snake; above her head the archer sign of the zodiac (Sagittarius) with a star and the

legend: **BENEM ERE _ NTIVM ERGO** (Benemerentium ergo = “therefore well deserving” or “regarding worthy services”).

The British Museum example is a beautiful old cast with a probably 17th century patina, with on the obverse the bottom of the letter T and on the reverse the letter O after BENEM scratched away. This text indicates that such medals were produced as tokens of esteem. It is one of the few explicit references to the function of Renaissance medals.

The spelling of “*benemerentium*” is a correction. An older version of this bronze medal still has the incorrect spelling “*benemoerentium*”.



Isabella d'Este

Weight: 25.77 g
Diameter: 39.0 mm
Thickness:

Source: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., photos with permission

On the obverse: **ISABELLA ESTEN[IS] . MARCH[IONISSA] MA[NTVAE]** (Isabella d'Este Marchioness of Mantua). On the reverse: **BENEMOERE _ NTIVM ERGO** (therefore well deserving).

Isabella also had Gian Cristoforo make a version of the medal in gold in a frame set with jewels. She kept this unique example in her Grotta, displayed next to an ancient cameo. Today this example is in the *Münzkabinett* (Coin Cabinet) of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (KHM) in Vienna:

This, from an inventory of the estate of Marchioness Isabella d'Este of Mantua prepared in 1542 by the notary Odoardo Stivini, is undoubtedly the same as the medal acquired by the Vienna Coin Cabinet between 1773 and 1775.⁶

“In addition, a gold medal with the likeness of Madam of blessed memory, when Your Highness was young surrounded by the letters ‘Isabella’ in diamonds with red enamel rosettes in between, surrounded by twisted bands with white and light blue enameled rosettes and on the back a figure of Victory in relief.”

This is an example of the highest form of **Gnadenmedaillen**, often conceived as pieces of jewelry and enameled and in special cases also decorated with precious

stones, like this one. In this case, Isabella did not bestow it on anyone but kept it for herself.



Isabella d'Este

Gold, Enamel and Precious Stones

Weight 110 g (equivalent to 31-1/2 Ducats)

Diameter of frame 69 mm, Diameter 38 mm

Designer and Medallist Gian Cristoforo Romano

KHM-Museumsverband (KHM Museum Association)

Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien Münzkabinett: Inv.-Nr. 6.833 bB

On the obverse: **ISABELLA ESTEN[IS] MARCH[IONESSA] MAN[TVAE]**

(Isabella d'Este Marchioness of Mantua)



On the reverse: **BENEMERE _ NTIVM ERGO**
(*therefore well deserving*)

The portrait on the obverse is probably the earliest preserved authentic adult likeness of Isabella who at the time was barely twenty years old. The back side shows a winged female figure with staff and palm. A snake rises in front of her legs, over her head can be seen the archer sign of the zodiac (Sagittarius) and a star

Isabella d'Este (Gonzaga) was a powerful and erudite politician, a humanist, patron of the arts and mother of seven children. Known as "The First Lady of the Renaissance", she was connected to almost all the rulers in Italy, either by birth or by marriage.

- ¹ The six children of Ercole I d'Este (141-1505) and Eleonora of Aragon (1450-1493): Isabella d'Este (1474-1539), Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497), Alfonso d'Este (1476-1493), Ferrante d'Este (1477-1540), Ippolito d'Este (1479-1520) and Guilo d'Este (1478-1561).
- ² "Saint Justina of Padua" by Bartolomeo Montagna (Bartolomeo Cincani) in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* online at <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/437145> accessed 24 January 2016. Image from Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justina_of_Padua#/media/File:Saint_Justina_of_Padua.PNG. The model for this painting has been attributed to Isabella d'Este, see website "Maiké's History of Women and the History of Everyday Life". <http://www.kleio.org/en/history/famtree/vip/445/?gallery>.
- ³ Rijksmuseum Het Koninklijk Penningkabinet, Leiden 1998 (NL), *Ben ik in beeld?* "Penningen uit de Italiaanse Renaissance, Isabella d'Este", pp. 78-79.
- ⁴ Comune di Mantova, Museo della Città, Palazzo Ducale san Sebastiano, Mantua (Italy) Photo with permission. Gian Cristoforo Romano, *Bust of Francesco II Gonzaga*, Terracotta, 1498-1505, height 70.0 x length 56 x 30 cm. Inv. no. 11696.
- ⁵ Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (USA) Photo with permission. Terracotta, formerly polychromed, 21-3/8 x 21-1/2 inches. AP 2004.01.
- ⁶ Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien 2009, *Meisterwerke des Münzkabinetts*, Band 10, "Gnadenmedaille von Isabella d'Este", pp. 204-205.

NI

Alexander III Tetradrachm Inscribed with the Name of "NIKOKLES" Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc.



Macedonian Kingdom. Alexander III the Great. Silver Tetradrachm (17.13 g), 336-323 BC. Paphos, ca. 322/1 BC. Head of Herakles right, wearing lion's skin headdress—in tiny letters amongst the tufts of hair along the front rim of the lion's skin—NIKOKΛΕΟΥΣ. Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ[Σ] to left of scepter, ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟ[Υ] in right field, Zeus seated left, holding eagle and scepter; in left field, ΠΑΦ monogram; below throne, grain ear. Price 3122; May 12-4. Carefully extended dies, boldly struck with incredible detail including the name of the Paphos king.

continued on page 43...

VOC Netherlands East Indies Japan Gold Cut Koban Heritage Rare Coins

VOC Cut and Countermarked Japan gold Koban ND (1773), Japanese cut gold Koban countermarked with a previously unrecorded “W.S. over rampant lion coat-of arms in circle” stamp, together with the punched inscription N (for *nummer*, or number) 483. The condition of the cut Koban is VF with chopmarks, the stamps are VF-XF.

During the 17th century large Japanese Kobans circulated in number in the Netherlands Indies—present day Indonesia—and were valued according to their gold content. These were given official status by the Netherlands Indies Government in 1673, valuing each Koban at 9 silver *rixdollars*. This valuation was increased to 10 *rixdollars* in 1681.

In 1690 due to counterfeiting the Government decreed that all genuine Koban in local circulation would be countermarked with a lion rampant facing to the left. However due to reductions in fineness of the official Japanese issue and problems with counterfeiting not only of the Kobans themselves but also of the rampant lion stamp the countermarking ceased. After this time gold Kobans were not officially countermarked and once again circulated valued only for their gold content.

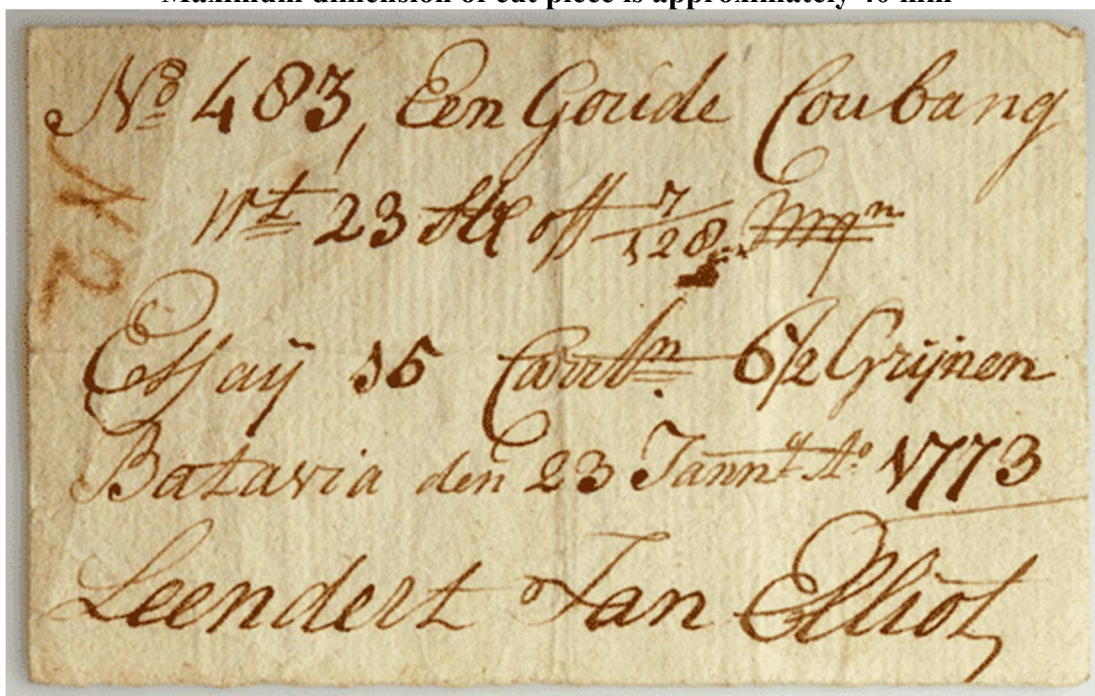
The present discovery piece is a Koban countermarked with a previously unrecorded “W.S coat-of-arms in circle” stamp together with the punched inscription N (for *nummer* = number) 483. This coin bears what Scholten, writing in 1953, describes on the official countermarked Koban (Sch 10) as, “a number of signs of warranty impressed by merchants.” These are also known as chopmarks.

Most remarkably perhaps is the discovery of the original VOC assay certificate of 1773 attesting to the fineness and weight of this exact coin. The certificate states that No. 483 is one gold *coubang* (Koban) and of a stated weight & fineness. It is dated at Batavia (Jakarta, the capital of the Netherlands East Indies) on the 23rd of January 1773 and signed LEENDERT VAN ELIOT. As stated in the *Plakaatboek 1602-1811* of J.A. van der Chijs (1891) Leendert van Eliot was the assayer at Batavia, apparently, by late 1765. According to additional historical records Heritage has found that previously he had been assayer at the Mint of Utrecht in the Netherlands from 1762 to 1765 as well as acting as Warden of the Mint in 1764. He may have been sent to the Indies to work on the major silver rupee coinage which was inaugurated effectively in 1765.

Most interestingly perhaps the certificate, which had likely remained with the coin for two centuries, was discovered by the coin’s owner at a banknote auction held by Spink & Son, where it was described a banknote of one gold *coubang* (Koban)! It was only sometime later that the owner—a banknote collector—realized that the number, “783,” on the note he had seen previously was the same as the number on the Koban, and ultimately linked the “banknote,” which turned out not to be a banknote, but a receipt for the cut Koban. The certificate will also be included for the buyer of this lot.



Maximum dimension of cut piece is approximately 40 mm



(Heritage Auctions, Inc., Auction 3019, April 25-28, 30 & May 1, 2012 | Chicago. Lot # 25213. Courtesy Heritage Auctions, ha.com.)

NI

Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy Gold Seven Ducat
Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc.



Austria. Holy Roman Empire. Gold 7 Ducats, ND (struck 1511) (Hall Mint). FR--. Cf.: Dav --; Egg. 15; Voglh. 3, all silver Guldeners. 24.18 grams. Maximilian I, 1490-1519. Laureate youthful bust of Maximilian right, draped and mantled, with shoulder-length hair; Latin titles around, across field, "ETA - TIS - 19 -." Reverse: Draped bust right of young Mary; Latin titles around, across field, "ETA - TIS - 20 -," 1479 below bust. Very slight doubling to portion of obverse inscription; with only a hint of doubling at parts of the portraits. Carefully handled and preserved over the years, with only a few trifling marks. Especially choice for issue in general. The nicest of three known. NGC graded MS-63.

Maximilian was able to consolidate the Habsburg holdings through marriage and outright purchase. He married Mary "The Rich", who was the only daughter of Charles the Bold (1433-1477), Duke of Burgundy, in 1477, and thus obtained control of the Burgundian Netherlands. In 1490, he bought Tyrol and Further Austria from his cousin Sigismund. In 1493, the death of his father Friedrich III, gave Maximilian control of all the Habsburg lands. This consolidation led to the modern power of the Holy Roman Emperors. A most historic issue that also bridges the gap from medieval Europe to the Renaissance. As an aesthetic masterpiece, this coin illustrates a royal love story unusual for that or any other time. Mary was the wealthiest young lady of her time and therefore a most desirable marriage candidate, with at least a dozen important rulers wanted to marry her. Her father died a few months before she was married, bequeathing her Burgundy, one of the wealthiest Duchies in Europe at that time. Maximilian, on the other hand, as the only surviving son of Emperor Frederic III of Habsburg, grew up in a simple court that always in need of money, which made his marriage to Mary a perfect match. He was a handsome and intelligent young man and fell in love with her at first sight. Tragically, after only five years, Mary died when she was crushed by her horse in a riding accident, leaving Maximilian and their son Philip the Beau in mourning.

Maximilian likely had these issues struck as a gentle remembrance of his first wife, the late Mary of Burgundy, sometime after the death of his second wife, Maria Bianca Sforza, perhaps around 1511. A silver medal (of perhaps 1479), commemorating the marriage, would have served as the prototype for these issues; cf. Lobbecke 404.

Maximilian was 19 years old at the time of their marriage; Mary was 20. From the collection of Count Arthur Enzenberg, Gilhofer & Ranschburg & A. Hess, A.G., Sale, Vienna 1936, Lot 142 (where it fetched 2,700, the highest price of the entire auction); Ex Galeries des Monnaies & Spink, October 1973, realized 185,000 Sfr; Illustrated in Money of The World, coin 79; Ex Millennia Collection Lot 477.

Reprinted courtesy of Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc., Auction 85, 2-3 June 2015, lot 3177.



Lucca, Gross d'Oro in name of Otto IV
Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc.



Italian States: Lucca. Grosso d'oro, ND. Fr-483; CNI-pl.V, 2; Bellesia-1. Issue in the name of Otto IV (post 1209) and issued under the authority of Frederico II, 1190-1250. Obverse. Monogram traditionally identified as that of Otto, the three pellets above the cross-bar. Legend: .OTTO.REX. Reverse:; The Volto Santo to left. Legend: S. VVLT' - D. LVCA. Of the greatest rarity. NGC graded AU-58. Otto was the third son of Henry the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony, and the grandson of King Henry II of England. In 1190, he became the foster son of Richard I of England, who was his maternal uncle. Holding a friendly relationship with the English royal family ensured Otto with solid political and financial support in his later career. Richard attempted to enhance his personal benefit as well as Otto's political importance by offering him the Earldom of York, later by negotiating Otto's marriage with Margaret, daughter and heiress of King William of Scotland, but both failed. In 1196, Richard enfeoffed Otto with the county of Poitou. After the death of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, Otto was elected as the successor by the princes opposing Henry's brother, Philip of Swabia, and the Staufien dynasty. However, even with the foreign supports from England and Pope Innocent III, Otto suffered some major failures in civil military campaigns and was about to be defeated, until Philip's dramatic assassination in 1208. Otto was then crowned as Holy Roman Emperor and King of Italy. His ambition in Italian states and Kingdom of Sicily broke his relationship with the pope, he was soon excommunicated

by Innocent III. Meanwhile, German nobles started to complain about his senseless activities in Italy, leaving the northern part of the empire undefended. His former allies now turned to Frederick II, son of Henry VI and another potential candidate to the throne. Otto retained his power until 1214, and after the united army of Otto and King John of England was defeated by Philip II of France, Otto had to abdicate the imperial throne in 1215. Even though indicated as an issue bearing Otto's name, but under the authority of Frederick (as listed in the Friedberg catalog), we are still not certain if that is the case due to the uncertainty of the actual issue date. Bearing the inscription of "King Otto" (OTTO.REX), the coin was probably struck during Otto's reign as King of Italy between 1208 and 1212. The silver coins of Otto in Luca are usually available in the market, while the gold issues are extremely rare. Due to lacking of mining resources, almost all early European gold coins of this era are rare. This issue was probably an unsuccessful competitor against the Augustalis, Florin and Ducat issued as crusader trade coins, and abandoned immediately. We have not seen this type to be offered in the public market in decades, and this presented piece is probably the finest example among very few survivors. A historically important piece that shows the proof of Otto's short reign in Italy, and therefore very desirable. Ex Ratto Collection.

Reprinted courtesy of Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc., Auction 85, 2-3 June 2015, lot 3375.

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... from page 38



Enlarged detail of NIKOKAEΘΥΣ on the lion skin

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Joseph I or Leopold I? A Poor Quality Forgery

Robert Ronus, NI #LM139

Forgeries have been around as long as coins. I recently came across an amusing contemporary forgery of a *Poltura* of Joseph I of Austria, Holy Roman Emperor from 1705 to 1711.

The Habsburg emperors issued a wide variety of coins for their huge territories. Transylvania was a relatively recent addition to the Empire. After the death of Ludwig (or Lajos) II, the last independent king of all Hungary, at the battle of Mohács against the Turks in 1526, the western part of the country fell under the control of Austria while the eastern part became the independent principality of Transylvania. The rest fell under the Ottomans. The Transylvanian princes led an awkward life between Austria and the Turks. After the Turks were defeated at the siege of Vienna in 1683, the prince of Transylvania, Michael Apafi, and the Estates General, were forced to recognize Austrian suzerainty. When Michael died in 1690, his son, Michael II, a minor, succeeded him but quickly had to abdicate in favor of Emperor Leopold I in 1691. A rival prince put forward by the Turks, Emmerich Tököli, had already been banished and had returned to Constantinople. Under the Treaty of Szatmar in 1711, Transylvania was formally absorbed into the Habsburg Empire.

When Austria took over, the Transylvanian monetary system was similar to neighboring Hungary:

- 2 Obols = 1 Denar
- 2 Denars = 1 Kreuzer
- 3 Denars or 1-1/2 Kreuzer = 1 Poltura
- 6 Denars = 1 Sechser
- 3 Kreuzer = 1 Groschen
- 12 Denars = 1 Zwölfer
- 60 Kreuzer = 1 Gulden
- 2 Gulden = 1 Taler

Leopold struck Groschen, Taler and also gold Ducats with the Transylvanian arms. Joseph I, who succeeded him in 1705, struck 1/2 Kreuzer, Kreuzer, Polturas, 3 Kreuzer, 1/2 Taler, Ducats, 3 Ducats, 4 Ducats, 5 Ducats and 10 Ducats.

The following illustration is the coin I came across and it appeared to be a humble Joseph I Poltura struck at Hermannstadt (now part of Romania and called Sibiu).



Obv: IOSEPHVS D G RISA (= Emperor of the Romans, ever august) G(ermany) H(ungary) B(ohemia) REX Bust rt., breaking out of circle. Rev: Crowned Transylvanian arms (star of Szecklers over Hungarian eagle & seven gates of Saxon

cities, divided) dividing 17 07 over POLTVRA over Hermannstadt arms (crossed swords) between two clover leafs. Billon 1.04 g 18.5 mm. References: Resch 5v. KM 529v. Schon 8v. Herinek 261v.

However, there is something odd about this coin - the bust. It does not look like Joseph I at all! In fact, it looks much more like his predecessor, Leopold I the Hogmouth. The hereditary Habsburg jaw was most prominent in Leopold and he was nicknamed “the Hogmouth.” In the cruel words of Simon Winder, “the tiny Leopold’s jaw” was “so distended that his mouth would fill with water if it rained.” Compare the busts in these two genuine Talers:



Leopold I Taler, 1691 Kremnitz mint

Josef I, Taler, 1710, Hall mint

It appears that someone, probably a Transylvanian nobleman, decided he could make some money forging these polturas in low grade billon and copied an old Leopold bust.

One would have thought that even illiterate peasants would have noticed there was something wrong with the bust. However, if they could not read the legend, perhaps they just thought it was a Leopold issue.

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Rare Depiction of the Labyrinth

Heritage Rare Coins



CRETE. Knossos. c. 450-375 BC. AR stater (25mm, 10.99 gm, 2h). Head of Ariadne left, wearing earring and necklace, hair rolled and bound with corn-wreath / Meander-pattern Labyrinth, five pellets in center, incuse square punch in each corner; all within shallow incuse circle. BMC Crete 9. Svoronos 39. Le Rider, *Monnaies Crétoise*, 23. Very rare! Struck on an exceptionally broad flan, with a complete Labyrinth and all four incuse squares. Slight weakness at high points of obverse, otherwise an attractively toned Extremely Fine.

According to legend, the Cretan artisan and scientist Daedalus built the Labyrinth on orders from King Minos, who needed a place to keep his wife Pasiphae's monstrous son, the Minotaur. Pasiphae had fallen in love with a beautiful sacrificial bull and the half-man, half-bull Minotaur was the result of her cross-species passion. The Latin poet Ovid, drawing from tradition and oral history, said Daedalus built the Labyrinth so cunningly he nearly trapped himself within its winding passages. The Minotaur was placed at the center and Minos ordered that seven youths and seven maidens be sent by Athens, then subject to Crete, each year as a sacrifice offering to feed the beast. The Athenian hero Theseus volunteered as one of the victims and, with the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne (depicted on the obverse of this piece), smuggled in a sword, which he used to slay the Minotaur, and a ball of twine to help him navigate the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth soon became the very symbol of Crete and is shown on the reverse of coins struck by Knossos, its largest city and Minos' capital. Some coins show the Labyrinth in a circular form, while others, such as this early example, depict a series of interlocking meander patterns. Archaeologists have found considerable evidence that the Labyrinth was not entirely mythical. Sir Arthur Evans proposed that the huge, sprawling Minoan palace complex of Knossos would have been viewed as an inescapable maze by anyone from backwards mainland Greece; more recently, an underground warren of tunnels and caves, some natural and others man-made, has been explored under Gortyna, providing another strong candidate for the Minotaur's home.

(Heritage Auctions, Inc., Auction 3020, September 7 & 10, 2012 | Long Beach. Lot # 24974. Courtesy Heritage Auctions, ha.com.)

NI

Cartagena (Colombia) *Plata Baja* Coin Identification

Herman Blanton, NI #LM115

During the 17th century Cartagena operated three minting periods: 1621-22, 1625-35 and an illegal mint in 1655. The *plata baja* (low silver) coins were made during the second minting period.

Alonso Turrillo de Yebra was awarded a contract from King Philip III of Spain in 1620 to build and operate a mint in Nuevo Reino de Granada (New Kingdom of Grenada). The mint was to be in Santa Fé de Bogota but during contract negotiations a branch mint at Cartagena was also authorized. The original justification for a branch mint in Cartagena was to produce cuartillos made of *vellon enriquecido* (enriched billon) using an invention of Turrillo's.

Enriched billon cuartillos were a special coin authorized from 1620-25 for Cartagena only. The purity was one part coin-silver to four parts copper (186.111 fine) and the weight was 100 cuartillos (25 reales) to the mark.

La moneda de vellón rico que, como queda dicho, habéis de labrar para la contratación y comercio por menor del dicho Reino, ha de ser ligada a cuatro marcos de cobre, con uno de plata, de ley de once dineros y cuatro granos, como se hace en las demás casas de moneda de estos Reinos. Cada marco hecho moneda de esta liga, ha de tener de valor veinticinco reales, y cada real cuatro piezas, y todo el marco, cien piezas, y cada cuartillo, cuarenta y ocho granos de peso. (Friede: Document 4, 52-61).

His invention was some kind of coin press that supposedly reduced the cost of making coins.

... un ingenio que con su industria fabricó, con el cual había de labrar la dicha moneda de cuartillos, por ser menuda y fácil de sujetar a la impresión de los cuños con una rueda. La cual se había de mover con muy poca agua o sangre. (Friede doc. 70).

(...a machine with such capability that it was able to make the mentioned cuartillo coins being small and easy to securely imprint the dies with a wheel; requiring little water or animal power.)

The low intrinsic value of the enriched billon made it unpopular and local pressure forced Turrillo to stop production. There are many documents in Friede that discuss the enriched billon.

Plata baja (low silver). No coins were produced in the years 1623-24 while Turrillo was in Spain dealing with mint matters. It was decided to stop making the enriched billon cuartillo coins and begin making coins with a little more silver in them. These new coins called "*plata baja*" were authorized by royal decree dated 10 March 1625 and ended by decree of 24 August 1626 (which ordered the *plata baja* to be recalled and melted down). They were to be produced in 1/4, 1/2 and 1 real denominations at the rate of 25 reales to the mark. The *plata baja* was 10 parts of "pure silver" of full legal fineness of 2380 maravedis mixed with 30 parts of copper. According to the intention of the decree the *plata baja* was 25% silver (10 parts pure silver/ 30 parts copper) but with the technical limit of silver refining recognized at 2380/2400 the fineness specified was $(10 \cdot (2380/2400) + 30)/40 = 247.917$ fine. ...*se labrasen cuartillos medios Reales y reales cencillos de plata baja ligando diez onzas de plata*

fin de toda ley de dos mill y trescientos y ochenta maravedís con treinta de cobre y que esta mescla que havía de tener cuarta parte de plata de toda ley y tres de cobre...cada marco de peso de esta ley veinte y cinco reales cencillos cinquenta medios y cien cuartillos... (Barriga I: Document Number 7, 173-78). The *plata baja* was authorized for Santa Fé and Cartagena, but since the authorization was revoked in 1626, before the Santa Fé mint opened in 1627, all pieces (except trial strikes made in Spain) must have been produced in Cartagena (Friede: Document 72, 238-40).

According to the documentation *plata baja* began in 1625 and continued into 1626. These coins may have been produced in the values of 1/4, 1/2, & 1 real. To date none of these have been 100% positively identified.

Enriched billon (*vellon rico*) cuartillo coins were authorized from 1620-25 for Cartagena only. The purity was one part coin-silver to four parts copper (186.111 fine) and the weight was 100 cuartillos (25 reales) to the mark.

Low silver (*plata baja*) was authorized in 1625. Due to public complaints production ceased in 1626 and the coins recalled. The purity was 247.917 fine and the weight was 25 reales to the mark in denominations of 1/4, 1/2 and 1 real. No specimens have been confirmed; however it is possible that the half-real illustrated as Figure 2 in Blanton (2007) is *plata baja* except that its date, 1622, precedes the *plata baja* authorization.

Coins	Authorized Years	Fineness	value/mark (230.1232 g)	mass
Enriched billon	1620-1625	186.111	25 reales (100 pieces)	1/4 R 2.301g
<i>Plata baja</i>	1625-1626	247.917	25 reales (100 pieces) 25 reales (50 pieces) 25 reales (25 pieces)	1/4 R 2.301g 1/2 R 4.602g 1 R 9.205g

Table 1

The history of the “mark”, or *marco* in Spanish, is a subject of its own. The mass of the mark was calculated in 1799 to be 230.0465 grams. This value is widely cited and used in the numismatic writings. Notwithstanding the acceptance of this value, Barriga (I: 30) uses 230.1232 grams for the mass the mark and therefore so do I for the coins of Nuevo Reino (Santa Fe de Bogotá and Cartagena).

A specimen that may be *plata baja* is a 1/2 real dated 1622. I date the coin 1622 which makes it “enriched billon” even though only cuartillos (1/4 real) were authorized. Other experts consider this specimen *plata baja* because 1/2 reales were not authorized for enriched billon. Another possibility is that the known specimen is a trial strike from 1622 not intended for circulation. It seems to me that if *plata baja* was a “better” coin than the enriched billon of 1621/22 then the dates 1625 and 1626 would have been used instead of 1622. But, it may be that the date in the machinery (Turrillo’s invention) was left at 1622 for reasons now unknown.

Production quantities:

According to Barriga (I:232-33) there were 5409 pesos 3 reales produced and I assume these were the enriched billon coins of 1621-22 but in volume III: 530 Barriga uses the years 1625/27. This calculates to 173,088 cuartillos. There is also mention of 40,000 pesos (Friede doc 79: 256-61) offered as a donation to end the *plata baja* production and recall it. However, the king did not accept the 40,000 pesos and ordered the *plata baja* stopped because it was appropriate governance to do so (Friede doc 80: 262-63). The documents do not say that 40,000 pesos of *plata baja* were produced, only that 40,000 was a number used to address the cost of recall and damages.

Here is the URL for the 2007 article “HALF-REAL COINS OF CARTAGENA OF THE INDIES” in which I classified the lone known specimen as enriched billon 1622. <http://www.numisane.org/Gaceta/GN166-167.pdf> (accessed 21 August 2015).

Here is the URL for the Heritage Rare Coins auction (Heritage 1/2014 NYINC signature sale, lot 23403) in which the cataloger opens the possibility that the same coin is *plata baja* instead of enriched billon.

<http://coins.ha.com/itm/colombia/world-coins/colombia-cartagena-felipe-iii-1622-1625-1-2-real-/a/3030-23403.s?ic4=ListView-ShortDescription-071515> (accessed 21 August 2015).

Mystery:

What do the *plata baja* coins look like and where are they?

Look for billon type coins likely similar (or identical) to 1622 billon cuartillos. Since the lone known 1622 half real and the known 1622 cuartillos are the same diameter it is possible that the one-real may also be the same size, however we don't know that for sure because none have been identified; it is possible that these coins may vary in size. We know with certainty that they can be differentiated by weight (see table).



M 11-1, 162_ (Cuartillo de Vellón)

M11-1,(1622)

Cuartillos (1/4 real) with mintmark S and assayer A

Images courtesy Jorge E. Restrepo



1622 dated half-real with mintmark RN and assayer A

(Published images suggest this coin is 18.5-20 mm nominal diameter)

Image courtesy Heritage Rare Coins ha.com

Barriga Villalba, A.M. 1969. *Historia de la Casa de Moneda*, 3 volumes. Bogotá: Banco de la Republica (de Colombia).

Blanton, Herman. "Half-Real Coins of Cartagena of the Indies," *Gaceta Numismática* 166/167 Septiembre/Diciembre 2007: 37-45.

Friede, Juan. 1963. *Documentos Sobre la Fundación de la Casa de Moneda en Santa Fé de Bogotá (1614-1635) Conservados en el Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Transcritos y Anotados*. Bogotá: Publicaciones del Banco de la Republica.



Vespasian Denarii: Paci Orbis Terrarum Augusti

Examples of the Vespasian denarii struck in Ephesus to commemorate the conclusion of the Roman civil war and the Jewish war. See the related article Vespasian Aureus on page 32 in this magazine.



Vespasian, 69-79. Denarius (Silver, 17mm, 3.54g 6), Ephesus, 70. IMP CAESAR VESPAS AVG COS II TR P P P Laureate head of Vespasian to right. Rev. PACI ORB TERR AVG Turreted and draped female bust to right, her hair bound with pearls; below bust, Φ . BN 338. Cohen 289. RIC 1413. RPC 821. Reprinted with permission of Nomos AG, Auction 10, 18 May 2015, lot 85.



Vespasian. Silver Denarius (3.6 g), AD 69-79. Ephesus, AD 69/70. IMP CAES VESPAS AVG, laureate head of Vespasian right. Reverse: PACI ORB TERR AVG, turreted and draped female bust right; below, Φ horizontally. RIC 1407; RPC 813; BMC 437; RSC 291. Reprinted with permission of Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles Inc., Auction 80, 1 June 2014, lot 3128.

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Book News and Reviews

Ecuadorian Coins—An Annotated Checklist. Just released, illustrated with 124 pages including pricing information. Conveniently sized at 4-1/2 by 8-1/2 inches to easily fit in your back pocket. The latest and most comprehensive listing available. Includes: pre-Columbian money, colonial coinage, coinage of the wars of independence, republican proto-coinage, pre-decimal coinage, decimal coinage, early pattern and unusual coinage, decimal patterns and unusual coinage, sets, NCLT and NLT coinage as well as tokens, scrip and fantasy issues of the Galapagos. The price is \$20.00 postpaid in the United States. Foreign orders add US \$10. Order from: Dale Seppa, 103 N 6th Avenue, Virginia, MN 55792. Order with personal check, money order, cash (at your own risk). PayPal or Credit Card orders can be sent through PayPal by sending the correct amount to: daleseppa@gmail.com.

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ECUADORIAN COINS

An Annotated Checklist

With Pricing Information

KEEP TRACK OF ECUADORIAN COINS
OWNED OR NEEDED

2016 Edition



Ecuadorian Coins—An Annotated Checklist serves collectors throughout the full spectrum. There is plenty of information for an expert or a long-time collector, enough mid-range material to get someone seriously interested in the country's coinage and yet simple enough listings that a beginner would feel much more comfortable within it than in the Standard Catalog of World Coins. A beginner would need three volumes of the SCWC to cover the range of material displayed, even though only about 240 coins are listed, not counting the Galapagos, NCLT, NLT and special issues. An advanced collector would feel challenged by the depth of the abbreviations and the titles and resources that lead one towards further study. An intermediate collector would find an easy way to track prices, grades and sources for coins offered or needed by said

individual. The checklist might lead one towards acquiring a set based on KM numbers, denominations, and metallic content or even perhaps towards attempting a complete collection of known coins. The challenges of a complete set are strenuous; the number of such coins exceeds those in a World coin set of my birth year. Even a straightforward collection of one of each variety of silver coins of Ecuador is a substantial goal.

Finding a source for all of these pieces is no easy task. The listings offer some auction sale citations—but I do wish there had been lot numbers included with the data provided. A major benefit of a well-used checklist, like this could become, is that it is far more realistic in pricing and rarity than other resources available. While not a substitute for 30+ years of numismatic experience in World coins, this checklist allows one to become adept at evaluating prices and conditions available for this country's coins and have one's data be real-time.

Many people's work seems to have gone into this checklist with a goal to advance research of Ecuadorian numismatics as well as Ecuadorian history. The Galapagos coins were an unexpected treat as well as a number of odd ball pre-decimal and decimal coins not listed anywhere else. Seppa combines his research with that of others to create a preeminent work covering a country he seems to love.

Overall, this is a worthy contribution to the world of coins of a small country with a 200 year history. I expect that it will lead its purchaser on a pursuit over a good many years and to many wonderful books on the subject.

Reviewed by John Okerson for the NI Bulletin.

NI

... from page 43

This tetradrachm is part of a discrete issue that clandestinely bears the name NIKOKΛEOYΣ on the obverse. As the name is found on seven different dies of varying style, it cannot be the name of the artist. Thus, the inescapable conclusion is that it is the name of the king of Paphos, Nikokles. Nikokles is known to have subsequently struck tetradrachms in his own name, so exactly why he was so careful to hide his name on these coins is not known. According to Price, the issue was probably struck at the time he was allied with Ptolemy I in his war against the Cypriot cities of Kition and Marion. Later, ca. 310/9 BC after Ptolemy had gained control of the entire island, Nikokles intrigued with Antigonos Monophthalmos, but Ptolemy sent a force against him under Argaïos and Kallikrates. The generals surrounded the palace and ordered Nikokles to commit suicide, which he did along with the rest of his family including his wife, daughters and two brothers.

Reprinted courtesy of Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins & Collectibles, Inc., Auction 80C, 3-4 June 2014, lot 3267.

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